

## REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL

# Fees and Charges By-Law Update

**To:** Warden and Members of County Council

**From:** Director of Corporate Services

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. That Schedule “A” to By-law No. 4889-2007, being a by-law to impose fees and charges for services provided by the County of Oxford that are not covered through direct taxation, be amended effective January 1, 2025, as set out in Report CS 2024-28 entitled “Fees and Charges By-law Update”;
2. And further, By-law No. 6656-2024, being a by-law to amend By-law No. 5274-2011, a by-law to authorize the receipt of small quantities of hazardous and liquid waste from the Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (ICI) sector at the Oxford County Municipal Hazardous Special Waste (MHSW) Depot and to adopt a load surcharge for those materials not funded under the Provincial Municipal Hazardous Special Waste (MHSW) program, be amended to remove reference to a load surcharge of \$30.00 per 25 litre container for materials not funded under the Provincial Municipal Hazardous Special Waste Program received at the Oxford County Municipal Hazardous Waste Depot, effective January 1, 2025, be presented to Council for enactment.

## REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

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- Fees and Charges By-law No. 4889-2007 is subject to an annual review to ensure the County’s fees and charges remain relevant and reasonably cover the County’s cost of service(s) and/or goods which provide a direct benefit to users.
- Inclusion of an ICI Hazardous Waste fee requires an amendment to By-law 5274-2011 to remove the original fee established under that by-law adopting a Municipal Hazardous Special Waste program, to incorporate it within the Fees and Charges By-law will allow regular review and updates as required.

## IMPLEMENTATION POINTS

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The proposed fees and charges included on the amended Schedule “A” to By-law No. 4889-2007 as attached to this Report are to take effect January 1, 2025.

### Financial Impact

The proposed fees and charges will be reflected in the 2025 draft Business Plan and Budget.

### Communications

The 2025 approved fees and charges will be posted on the County website for public information. A copy of the fees and charges will be circulated to area municipalities and water/wastewater billing agents, and the local development community will be advised of increases to planning and engineering fees.

## 2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

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Oxford County Council approved the [2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#) on September 13, 2023. The Plan outlines 39 goals across three strategic pillars that advance Council’s vision of “Working together for a healthy, vibrant, and sustainable future.” These pillars are: (1) *Promoting community vitality*, (2) *Enhancing environmental sustainability*, and (3) *Fostering progressive government*.

The recommendations in this report supports the following strategic goals.

### Strategic Plan Pillars and Goals

PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3
		
<b>Promoting community vitality</b>	<b>Enhancing environmental sustainability</b>	<b>Fostering progressive government</b>
		<b>Goal 3.4 – Financial sustainability</b>

See: [Oxford County 2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#)

## **DISCUSSION**

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### **Background**

At the regular meeting of Council held November 28, 2007, By-law No. 4889-2007, being a by-law to impose fees and charges for services that the County of Oxford provides was passed and requires an annual review of the fees and charges to ensure they remain relevant.

### **Comments**

All County departments have been asked to review the fees and charges associated with the services they provide for reasonableness and to consider any new or existing services that may warrant a non-tax or non-rate supported user fee or charge.

Attached as Attachment 1 is Schedule "A" to By-law No. 4889-2007, for fees and charges applied in 2024 (column entitled "Approved 2024 Rate"), with proposed amendments for 2025 identified in red print under the column entitled "Draft 2025 Rate". Staff is seeking Council's approval of all fees and charges listed in the column entitled "Draft 2025 Rate".

The following provides explanation for the more significant amendments:

#### **General**

Non-sufficient funds (NSF) charge has been increased to account for the increased administrative and bank charges incurred to collect. Exemption for Human Services clients has also been eliminated. The non-sufficient funds charge was been renamed to include "returned item charge" to encompass chargeback related fees incurred by the bank and credit card company for disputed charges.

#### **Library**

A number of minor changes in fees are being proposed for library services:

- Faxing has been consolidated under one line for both long distance and local as the costs are same.
- Moving to a flat rate maker space fee to allow customers to better understand costs at the time of registration to use the space.
- Room rental increases to align with similar size library systems in the area and now includes HST to ease collection.
- An after-hour room rental fee has been added to maximize the usage of branches when closed to the public. These fees will offset costs for staffing hours required for usage when the library is closed. Staff will need to be on site for opening/closing of locations and to ensure proper use of library space during closed hours.

## **Paramedic Services**

Increase in event coverage user fees to reflect increase in wage costs.

## **Community Planning**

In August 2023, Council considered Report CP 2023-250 which presented potential options to address planning staffing and other resource needs going forward, with a view to establishing Community Planning service levels into 2024 and beyond. In response to that report, Council adopted a resolution in support of developing a more comprehensive 'in-house' planning service over the longer term that would be typical of a more urbanized municipality of similar size and growth rate as Oxford and have the ability to provide a broader range of planning services and expertise to the County and Area Municipal partners. The intent being that this enhanced level of service would be developed and implemented over time.

To help support this direction, Council subsequently approved Report CP 2023-371, which proposed an initial 2024 fee increase of 25% over 2023 fees for County planning applications to help off-set some of the additional staffing costs. As this initial increase still left Oxford's fees well below those of neighbouring communities, staff committed to undertaking a more fulsome review of planning application fees in 2024 to determine appropriate fee levels for County planning applications. Based on this review, staff are proposing to further increase the fees for all County planning applications to more fulsomely off-set/recover the direct costs of processing and reviewing such applications through the applicable application fees (i.e. a more cost recovery/user pay approach). The proposed 2025 planning application fees are generally comparable with those for similar applications in neighbouring municipalities. That said, while the proposed fee for Official Plan Amendments and Subdivision/Condominium applications will increase substantially, they remain lower than the fees charged for those applications in some neighbouring communities. As such, staff are proposing to review the fees charged for those applications again in 2025, to determine if further increases may be warranted in 2026. The proposed planning application fee increases will assist in achieving a more cost-recovery based approach for the County's development review service, which has grown to keep pace with the higher volumes and increasing complexity of development applications and inquiries over the last few years.

The renewable energy application fee has been removed. Renewable energy projects are now subject to Planning Act applications such as Official Plan Amendments, Zoning By-Law amendments and consents, depending on their location and scope, so a separate fee is no longer required.

## **Public Works Development Review**

The annual inflationary factor<sup>1</sup> has been applied to development review fees, rounded up for ease of collection.

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<sup>1</sup> CPI increase used for the purpose of updating the fees contained in the report is based on the year over year increase of 3.0% as of June 2024

## **Waste Management**

The proposed 2025 tipping fee for disposal of material at the landfill has been increased by CPI<sup>1</sup>, consistent with previous years. Flat rate tipping fees (default fee when weigh scale is offline) increased by new 2025 tipping fee rate multiplied by the average gross weight for each vehicle type (based on a 10 year weighted average). In response to a Council Resolution on May 22, 2024, waste management staff have added a new flat rate fee for loaded trailer only to accommodate situations where waste is only in a trailer and not both the vehicle and the trailer.

The fees for recycling bins, composters, and green cones are proposed to increase at the inflationary increase of 3.0%<sup>1</sup>, rounded to the nearest \$1.00 to ease collection. Currently these bins are being sold at less than cost to encourage waste diversion activities.

ICI Hazardous Waste fee was originally established under By-Law No. 5274-2011 at \$30 per 25L container. This fee has not increased with inflation each year. It is recommended that the fee be increased to \$40 to reflect the inflationary impact that should have occurred over the years since the original By-Law passing. In light of the foregoing, an amending by-law is required for By-law No. 5274-2011 that originally authorized an ICI Hazardous Waste fee to refer to Fees and Charges By-law 4889-2007, as amended, effective January 1, 2025. Incorporating this fee in the Fees and Charges By-law will allow for regular review and updating as required – refer to Attachment 2 for a markup of the amendment proposed for By-law 5274-2011.

## **Wastewater Treatment**

The annual inflationary factor<sup>1</sup> has been applied for treatment costs for general hauled septage and hauled wastewater.

## **Water and Wastewater**

A number of minor fees changes are being proposed for water and wastewater:

- New radio transmitter costs due to higher back plate assembly costs
- Remaining fee changes are to increase by the inflationary factor

## **Woodingford Lodge**

Staff accompaniment service is being removed from the schedule as it is no longer being provided due to insufficient staff coverage.

## **Bag Tag Fees**

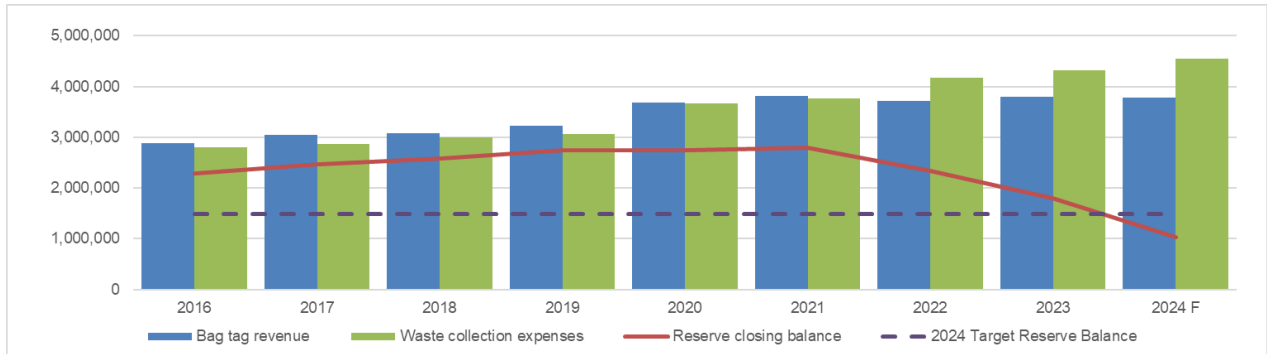
A review of the bag tag fee is underway with a report to be presented to Council in the fall aligning with waste collection contract extensions.

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<sup>1</sup> CPI increase used for the purpose of updating the fees contained in the report is based on the year over year increase of 3.0% as of June 2024

Waste collection costs are funded 100% by user fees (bag tags) with surpluses/deficits each year allocated to or from a dedicated reserve. Table 1 below shows the financial history of the bag tag program. Up until 2021, revenues and expenses were closely aligned. However, since this time expenses have outpaced revenues, resulting in a depletion of the reserve to a point where the target reserve balance is no longer being met.

**Table 1: Bag Tag Program: Historical Performance**



Bag tag fees were last increased July 1, 2014 with an increase from \$1.50 to \$2.00. To continue with the direction of a full user pay system, bag tag fees will need increase in 2025 to address the trending decline, and in preparation for further cost increases anticipated for waste collection costs in January 2026 with the elimination of recycling co-collection, as collection costs are currently split 50/50 between these services.

**Water and Wastewater Rates**

Water and wastewater rates are approved annually in accordance with the Water and Wastewater Rates Policy 6.22 that established a methodology for calculating annual rates. The rates incorporate an inflationary factor and a capital renewable contribution that is derived from the Asset Management Plan and 2025 Draft Budget. Recommended rates will be presented to Council with the Draft 2025 Budget Package on November 13.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The proposed fees and charges as presented under this report will be charged directly to users in 2025 to compensate for use of County provided services and materials.

**SIGNATURES**

**Report author:**

Original signed by

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 Carolyn King, CPA, CA  
 Manager of Finance

**Departmental approval:**

Original signed by

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Lynn S. Buchner, CPA, CGA  
Director of Corporate Services

**Approved for submission:**

Original signed by

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Benjamin R. Addley  
Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment 1 – Schedule “A” to By-law No. 4889-2007, as amended  
Attachment 2 - By-law No. 5274-2011, as amended